

# Nim's Island

By Wendy Orr



Best for bridging Brownies and Juniors

*Book Summary* – Nim's Island is a heartfelt and hilarious adventure that chronicles the exploits of Nim, a young girl living a high-tech Robinson Crusoe existence on an tropical island with her scientist father and her best friends—a motherly sea lion, a rambunctious iguana and a sea turtle. When Nim's father embarks on a day of research at sea, she begins an unlikely e-mail communication with an agoraphobic novelist who lives in New York City. When a storm prevents her father's return and unpredictable dangers confront Nim and the Island, she must find the resources to survive. At the same time, the novelist begins to realize that her pen pal is a little girl who is alone and in trouble. She discovers the courage to leave her safe haven and rescue Nim.

## Meeting 1: Setting up your Book Club

This meeting guide provides a basic outline for hosting three or four 60-minute Book Club meetings. Details for discussion questions, activities, and field trips can be found in the individual Book Club Meeting Guide for each book. You are welcome to incorporate as much or as little of this meeting guide into your meetings. This guide can also be used as the basis for a sampler troop. Consider asking a local book club to host the meetings!

10 minutes: Welcome and troop business. If you are a Sampler Troop, do a short intro to Girl Scouts.

10 minutes: Talk with the girls about the purpose of a book club. Ask them discussion questions such as: Why do you want to make a book club? What do you expect to get out of it?

30 minutes: Have the girls decide the rules of their book club. You may want to have poster board to write up the guidelines the girls decide on so they can be posted at your next book club meeting. Some important things to think about are:

1. How are you going to choose the books?

Some book clubs only read one kind of book (like mysteries or fantasy), while others like to read a variety of genres. GSCNC has a selection of book meeting guides online, but troops are free to choose their own books.

2. How will girls get the book?

Will girls be required to buy the book? Will troop funds pay for them? Can girls borrow the book from the library? Many libraries will order multiple copies of a book for a book club. If the girls need to purchase the book, is there a cost limit?

3. What if a girl does not finish reading the book?

Make sure girls are enthusiastic about reading the book so that they follow through and finish. If a girl is unable to finish reading the assigned section for a book, decide on guidelines for her participation. You want to make sure that she is included, but do not want her to steer the discussion off-track or be confused about what is being discussed.

4. Who will lead book discussions?  
An important part of any book club is how the discussion is led. It might be helpful to have one person lead the discussion, either a troop leader or a girl. This will differ depending on the age and program level of your troop. You can also have each girl come up with her own questions and go around the group.
  5. How will girls participate?  
Will everyone *have* to talk about the book? Will girls have specific turns to talk (i.e. going around in a circle)? Do girls need to raise their hands? In most troops there are both quiet and talkative girls. You might have some girls who add a lot to say and some who rarely speak up. Have girls come up with a fair balance so that everyone contributes in some way.
  6. Are book club discussions confidential?  
Sometimes girls will share opinions or thoughts about certain subjects that they might not wish to have discussed outside of the troop. Talk to the girls about why this is important and remind them that they have an obligation to be respectful about other's opinions and to not repeat what was said outside of the troop.
  7. What to Bring  
Do girls need to bring their book with them to the meeting? Can they also bring show-and-tell items that have to do with what they read?
- 5 minutes: Overview of book to read for the next meeting.  
5 minutes: Closing comments/questions.

## Meeting 2

### *Discussion Questions (Chapters 1-7)*

#### **Discover**

What things would you absolutely need if you lived on an island with your family? What food would you want on your island and how would you take care of it? The author describes many animals to give readers a clear picture of Nim's island. If the author was writing a story about you, what animals would she describe living near you and your home?

#### **Connect**

How is Nim's day different from yours? How is it the same? In the story, Nim replies to an e-mail from a stranger. In real life, kids are usually told not to e-mail strangers. Why is that? If you were in the story, what would you do to stay safe while e-mailing?

#### **Take Action**

Some of Nim's animal friends are endangered species. What does it mean if an animal is endangered? How does Nim protect her friends? What are ways you can help protect animals that are endangered, even when they live far away from you? What is your emergency plan if something happens during your troop meeting? If something happens at home? Who do you contact in an emergency?

*Activity: Make a raft*

Supplies:

- roll of heavy-duty aluminum foil
- towels (at least one per team) or paper towels
- lots of pennies, marbles or other objects that all weigh the same
- wading pool for outside or one water-filled tub for each team if indoors

Divide girls into pairs or groups of three for this activity. Explain that they are doing an experiment like Nim did. They must create a boat from aluminum foil that can carry as much weight as possible. They can try different shapes, but they can only use one sheet of foil when making their boats.

Give each team a square of aluminum foil and a pile of weights to work with. If you are using tubs, fill them with 3-4 inches of water, enough to know if the boat is sinking. Ideally, each team will have a tub to work with so they can quickly try things out and then redesign and try again. Have spare squares of aluminum foil available in case girls damage their boats or otherwise are unable to make the modifications they need to their existing boats.

Give girls a 10 minute warning. When there are just 5 minutes left for activity time, stop the design process and call girls together as a group. Ask girls how many weights their boats could support. Retest if necessary. Which designs seemed to work best? If Alex Rover's hero had to build a boat from aluminum, what would the girls recommend to her?

### *Closing*

Ask girls to consider choices for their final activity (see Meeting 4 suggestions). Remind girls to read chapters eight through the end for the next meeting.

## Meeting 3

### *Discussion Questions (Chapters 8-end)*

#### **Discover**

How did Nim use resources wisely? Who were the Troppo Tourists in the story? Were they bad people?

#### **Connect**

Describe a time when you needed to be rescued or you rescued someone or something. How did you feel during the rescue? How did you feel afterward? Describe some of the ways the characters in the book communicated with each other. Some ways worked better than others – describe times in the story when people didn't understand a message. What is your favorite story? If you could meet the person who wrote that story, what would you ask him or her?

#### **Take Action**

How did Nim protect the island from the Troppo Tourists? How do you protect the people or things you care about? Stories can be powerful tools to convince someone what they should believe. Alex Rover created a special story for the Troppo Tourists so they would leave Nim's island alone. Describe a story you read that changed how you

thought about something. Is it ok to stretch the truth in a story to get your message across? Why or why not?

*Activity: What If...*

Supplies:

- Each “What if...” situation written on a slip of paper; hat or bag from which to draw situations
- Write each “What if...” situation on a slip of paper, fold it up and put it in the hat or bag prior to the meeting.

Explain to girls that Nim and her father must have discussed what to do in different situations so she knew what to do in case of emergency. They may have even practiced what to do. Explain that you will practice what to do in various situations so that girls can stay safe.

Divide girls into groups of two or three. Have one member draw a situation. When all the groups have their situations, have them work in their groups to figure out what they would do. They should develop a skit explaining their response to that situation.

After 10 minutes working on their skits, call everyone together. Each skit should begin with the girls reading the situation to the group. After each skit, allow a minute or two for audience comments on the girl’s reactions in the skit. What went well? Is there another way to react in that situation that would be safer?

**Situations** (For additional situation ideas, check pages 11-12 in Safety-Wise and the “Family and Friends” and “How to Stay Safe” sections of the Junior Girl Scout Badge Book.):

- Your friend is coming to visit and bringing her baby sister. What should you do to keep the baby sister safe while she is playing with you in the living room?
- You are in your troop meeting and you smell smoke.
- You are camping outside and you can hear thunder in the distance.
- You come home and your big brother is lying on the couch. He doesn’t look very good and he doesn’t wake up when you shake him to ask if he’s ok.
- A stranger asks you and your friend for directions to the nearest fast food place.
- Your troop is planning a winter campout. What do you pack to stay safe?
- You hear someone picking on the new girl in your class.
- You are shopping with some friends and can not find them.
- Your friend asks you to hold something for her so she doesn’t get caught with it.
- Your troop is going to the beach on a field trip. What do you pack to stay safe?
- The weather report says a hurricane is coming our way. What do you do at home to be prepared?
- You are out playing soccer with some friends. One of your friends looks pale and says she is feeling dizzy.

*Closing*

Have the girls sit in a circle. Have each girl name one reason she is happy to live near friends and family. After everyone has named a reason, suggest that over the next week girls tell a friend or family member that she is glad to have them in her life.

## Meeting 4

### *Meeting 4: Extension activities*

Field Trips (can be virtual or actual)

- National Geographic Museum, Washington, DC (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/museum/>): National Geographic sends scientists and photographers all over the world. Where are some of the places they've been? What do they study? What dangers do they face and how do they prepare for them?
- National Aquarium, Washington, DC (<http://www.nationalaquarium.com/>): What kinds of fish and other aquatic animals might have lived near Nim's island? How do the animals get to the aquarium?
- National Zoo, Washington, DC (<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/>): Can you find the animals mentioned in *Nim's Island*? How does the Zoo make them comfortable since the weather here is different from their home? What animals would you want to live with on an island? Where would your island need to be? What does the National Zoo do to help animals that are endangered?
- Local Nature Center: What animals would be in a story about you in this area? Are there endangered animals in your area? How can you help protect animals in your area?

## Additional Activities

### *Activities*

- Flat Juliette (<http://www.flatstanley.com/girl-scouts.htm>): Flat Juliette can check out a place before we visit or go places we can't visit. Have your troop make Flat Juliette's and send them to family, friends, or troops elsewhere in the world.
- Make a tropical island in a shoebox.
- Watch the *Nim's Island* movie
- Write an adventure story
- Make a map of your neighborhood or meeting place
- PEGS: Leave No Trace Kit, available upon request from <http://www.gscnc.org/pdf/leader/c360.pdf>

### *Related Recognitions*

- Safety Award (page 11-12 of Safety-Wise)
- Together We Prepare (<http://www.gscnc.org/pdf/patches/togetherweprepare.pdf>)

### *Other Resources*

- Wendy Orr's website: <http://www.wendyorr.com/>
- Walden Book's website: <http://www.walden.com/walden/properties/nim/index.php>